(c) whether these rates are much higher as compared to those of other nationalized banks; if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) what are Government/SBI guidelines/instructions, if any, on the subject; and

(e) the reasons for SBI not falling in line with other nationalized banks and charging a higher rate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) State Bank of India (SBI) have reported that the service charges have been revised with effect from 1st February, 2006. The service charges are displayed on the Bank's website www.sbi.co.in.

(c) to (e) With effect from September, 1999, banks have been given freedom by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to fix their service charges for various types of services rendered by them with the approval of their Board of Directors. However, banks have been advised that while fixing service charges for various type of services provided by them, they should ensure that charges are reasonable and not out of line with the average cost of providing these services. Further, banks have also been advised to ensure that the customers with low volume of activities are not penalised.

Kisan Credit Card Scheme

3231. SHRI S.S. CHANDRAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Kisan Credit Card scheme is being implemented in the country now;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the amount of funds sanctioned under the scheme during the first year of the scheme and during the current year; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to extend this scheme to benefit more farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir, Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme is in operation since August 1998 and it was primarily intended to cater to the short-term credit requirements of the farmers.

Banks issued KCCs to farmers who were eligible for sanction of production credit for cultivation purposes. However, the scope of the scheme has since been widened to cover other related purpsoes like term/working capital for agriculture and allied activities including a component for consumption needs. Now, the scheme also covers all eligible tenant farmers, oral lessees and share croppers. The main objectives of the scheme are to provide hassle free credit, to reduce the cost of borrowings and to bring down borrowings by farmers from informal sources like money lenders etc.

(c) The amount sanctioned by all the agencies, i.e. Cooperative Banks, RRBs and Commercial Banks together in the first year of implementation (1998-1999) was Rs. 2,310 crore and during 2005-06 (April 2005 to February 2006) was Rs. 38,277 crores.

Special Plan Assistance to Himachal Pradesh

3232. SHRI SURESH BHARDWAJ: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the special plan assistance for the annual plan 2005-06 provided to Himachal Pradesh;

(b) whether any special plan assistance is being provided to Himachal Pradesh during the year 2006-07; if so, the amount to be provided; and

(c) whether the special plan is provided in addition to the plan approved by the Planning Commission.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Planning Commission allocated Rs. 400 crores as Special Plan Assistance for Himachal Pradesh during 2005-06 of which the entire amount was released by Ministry of Finance.

(b) During the financial year 2006-07, the Planning Commission has allocated an amount of Rs. 475 crores as Special Plan Assistance for Himachal Pradesh of which no amount has so far been released to the State Government of Himachal Pradesh.

(c) Special Plan Assistance is one of the components of the Central Assistance allocated by the Planning Commission for financing Annual